

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1029

AN ACT

To allow the use of certified facility dogs in criminal proceedings in Federal courts, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Courthouse Dogs Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. USE OF CERTIFIED FACILITY DOG FOR TESTIMONY**
 4 **IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 223 of title 18, United
 6 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3502
 7 the following:

8 **“§ 3503. Use of certified facility dog for testimony in**
 9 **criminal proceedings**

10 “(a) DEFINED TERM.—In this section, the term ‘cer-
 11 tified facility dog’ means a dog that has graduated from
 12 an assistance dog organization that is a member of an
 13 internationally recognized assistance dog association that
 14 has a primary purpose of granting accreditation based on
 15 standards of excellence in areas of—

16 “(1) assistance dog acquisition;

17 “(2) dog training;

18 “(3) dog handler training; and

19 “(4) dog placement.

20 “(b) REQUESTS FOR USE OF CERTIFIED FACILITY
 21 DOGS.—Either party in a criminal proceeding in a Federal
 22 court may apply for an order from the court to allow a
 23 certified facility dog, if available, to be present with a wit-
 24 ness testifying before the court through—

25 “(1) in-person testimony; or

1 “(2) testimony televised by 2-way, closed-circuit
2 television.

3 “(c) CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL.—A Federal court
4 may enter an order authorizing an available certified facil-
5 ity dog to accompany a witness while testifying at a hear-
6 ing in accordance with subsection (b) if the court finds
7 that—

8 “(1) the dog to be used qualifies as a certified
9 facility dog;

10 “(2) the use of a certified facility dog will aid
11 the witness in providing testimony; and

12 “(3) upon a showing by the party seeking an
13 order under subsection (b), the certified facility dog
14 is insured for liability protection.

15 “(d) HANDLERS.—Each certified facility dog author-
16 ized to accompany a witness under subsection (c) shall be
17 accompanied by a handler who is—

18 “(1) trained to manage the certified facility dog
19 by an assistance dog organization described in sub-
20 section (a); and

21 “(2) a professional working in the legal system
22 with knowledge about the legal and criminal justice
23 processes.

24 “(e) DEADLINE.—The party seeking an order under
25 subsection (b) shall apply for such order not later than

1 14 days before the preliminary hearing, trial date, or other
 2 hearing to which the order is to apply.

3 “(f) OTHER ORDERS.—A Federal court may make
 4 such orders as may be necessary to preserve the fairness
 5 of the proceeding, including imposing restrictions on, and
 6 instructing the jury regarding, the presence of the cer-
 7 tified facility dog during the proceedings.

8 “(g) SAVINGS PROVISION.—Nothing in this section
 9 may be construed to prevent a Federal court from pro-
 10 viding any other accommodations to a witness in accord-
 11 ance with applicable law.”.

12 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The chapter analysis
 13 for chapter 223 of title 18, United States Code, is amend-
 14 ed by inserting after the item relating to section 3502 the
 15 following:

“3503. Use of certified facility dog for testimony in criminal proceedings.”.

Passed the Senate December 19, 2019.

Attest:

Secretary.

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